842 The Thonga child is always received into this world with great joy by the whole family. If it is a girl, it means oxen to buy a wife for one of the sons later on ; therefore it means increase not only in the wealth but in the number of the members of the family. If it is a boy, there is no direct material enrichment, but the clan has been strengthened and the name of the father is 846 glorified and perpetuated. In the case of the birth of a first-born 539 child (ñwana wa matibula), a special ceremony is performed at the 851 end of the first week. When the grandmother has smeared the 603 hut, she goes home, summons all the female relatives, sometimes as many as ten or fifteen ; they take with them food, ochre and fat prepared for this purpose. Two or three men accompany them. They enter the village of the child executing a special dance called *khana*, and singing the following song (which is the proper song to glorify a first-born) :

I celebrate my pot which has done *ngelebendje*...

They compare the child with a pot of clay which has gone through the firing process. It has been tried as one always tries a pot by letting it fall to the ground ; but it is not shattered, because it has not cracked in the furnace, it has kept intact ! This is what is meant by the descriptive adverb ngelebendje.

846 Then they smear the baby, the mother, the father, everybody 851 in the village with ochre. It is a great feast. A goat will be 603 killed, if possible, because the father and mother have "found a village" (kuma muti) by the child, they have "grown roots" (mila mitju). This is a law, but its omission is not taboo. When the grandparents do not perform this ceremony, it is an insult to the parents of the child, but no evil consequence will follow.

765 is a meteorite ground to fine powder. It is interesting to compare this use of the
753 meteorite with the fact that, amongst the Thongas, this fumigation is intended to prevent
821 convulsions. Convulsions, as we shall see (Part VI. Chap. II. B) are caused by the mysterious power of Heaven. The meteorite has fallen from Heaven. Thus the baptism of smoke aims at bringing the child under the influence of the two main elements of Bantu religion : the ancestor gods and Heaven.

5) The tying of the cotton string.

854 When the child "tiyelanyana" viz. "becomes a little firm,"
857 the mother, having to plough her fields and to cook the food, begins to seat him on the sandy soil, after having made a kind of hole of about five inches in depth. We have seen Thonga babies already sitting at the age of two months. But this "dumping" hardly meets all the requirements, and the mother looks for a girl to help her to take care of the baby (wa ku'tlanga na ye, to play with him). She puts the child in the charge of an elder sister or a cousin ; a girl of five to ten is quite strong enough for the purpose. I have often admired the patience of these miniature nurses, sometimes not very much bigger than the child they carry, with their very troublesome babies.

852 But very soon the child begins to crawl (kasa) and this is the
715 time when a very striking rite is performed. This rite seems to be practised all over the tribe, but it has more importance in the Northern clans than amongst the Ba-Ronga. I shall here give the description of Viguet, who belonged to the Tsungu clan and had emigrated to the Spelonken. My readers must forgive me if I cannot tell the story with all its details and if I am obliged to write some of them in Latin (1).

851 These are the ipsissima verba of my informant : "This is a
833 great law amongst the Thongas. When a child begins to crawl,
766 even before, the *puri* is tied round his waist. The *puri* is a
842 cotton (2) string. Father and mother fix the day ; if they forget to do so, their parents, (the grandparents) will remind them of the law. They must have sexual intercourse, but in such a way that the mother will not become pregnant, s. n. i. (Annotatio 2). The mother will have to take in her hands "their filth" (thyaka ra hona) smear the string with it and tie it round the child. It will

(1) A more complete description of this rite and of some others related to the taboos of the Thongas will be found in the Revue d'Ethnographie et de Sociologie, Oct. 1910, Paris.

(2) There are plants of cotton probably subspontaneous in the Low Country of the Transvaal of Delagoa Bay.

1 [See p. 616 IN these categories OR IN 116--Analyst]

851 remain there till it falls to pieces. After this operation the
766 child is "grown up" and three things are allowed which were
833 taboo before :

1) The child, if he dies, can be buried on the hill, in dry soil. Before the *boha puri* he would have been buried in wet soil, near the river, as is customary with twins and children who have cut their upper teeth first.

2) He can participate in the strange purification called *hlamba ndjaka* which takes place after the death of one of the inhabitants of the village (See ceremonies of death).

852 3) The parents can again have conjugal intercourse, though
766 they must avoid conception till the child is weaned. Before this
833 ceremony it was absolutely prohibited, and should they have
821 sinned in this respect and the mother have conceived, they would
842 be very guilty! It is a dangerous taboo! They would have "stolen" the child, stolen it from the law (yiba nawen). The child would not have "entered the law." It would be useless to tie the string round him in order to repair the evil done. Should he live long, should he even become an old man, he will have to be buried in wet soil, otherwise the rain would be prevented from falling.

Amongst the Malulekes and the Hlengwes such children are even burnt after their death. We shall speak later on about the mysterious relation established by the Thongas between these children, their burial, and the rain.

852 Amongst the Ba-Ronga this rite is called *boha nshale* (to tie
854 the cotton) and can be performed in the same way or even more simply by the father (Annotatio 3)[2]. Parents, when they have duly tied the string on the little one, are said to have *fuya nwana*, viz. taken possession of the child.

Amongst them again, another thing is then allowed which was taboo before. The child can be carried on the shoulders without ntehe by the arms alone (hi minkono).

851 It is clear that the tying of the cotton string means the official reception of the child into the family, even into human society. Before that, he was hardly considered as a human being, he was *shilo* (a thing), *khuna* (an incomplete being). Now he is *nkulu*,

2 [See p. 516 in these categories or in 116 - Analyst]

l: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

862/603 The very day of his weaning, the child must leave the village of his parents and go to stay with his grandparents. A little mat and a few clothes have been prepared for him and the grandmother comes to take him. If he is the first-born, he must go to the parents of the mother ; the second child will be received by the parents of the father. Sometimes father and mother accompany their offspring themselves, during the night, to make the separation easier. It is a sad day for them as well as for the child! The following day the parents go again to see how the little one has stood their absence. They do not enter the village. They remain hidden in the little copse and look at their child through the branches! He must not see his mother, otherwise he would cry... A touching scene indeed!

862 Should the weaned child be obliged to stay with his parents, the mother will smear her breast with Jamaica pepper (biribiri) so that he may lose his taste for the maternal milk as quickly as possible.

862/842/753 The act of weaning is called *lumula*. It comes from the verb *luma* to bite, followed by the reversive suffix *ula* which means to take away, to undo (like *un* in undo). The mother as well as the child are said to have *lumuka* viz. to be in that state when weaning has been accomplished. This word is pronounced with a curious smile, because the act of weaning is in direct relation with the sexual life. As we have seen, sexual intercourse is absolutely prohibited before the tying of the cotton string, viz. for one year after the birth. Afterwards it is allowed, but the mother must not conceive another child before she has weaned the one she is nursing. The law is even more stringent : she must not conceive before her milk has entirely passed away (phya mabelen), after the weaning ceremony, because if she became pregnant, that would "cross the way of the weaned child" (tjemakanya ñwana), cut "his road" (tjemela), "go beforehand" (rangela) ; he would become thin, paralysed, with big holes below the shoulders. He must first be firm (tiyela), then a new pregnancy will not be able to cause him to suffer from dysentery or other ailments!

Often the parents do not observe this very hard law! If they

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

862 842 see that conception has taken place before the child is weaned, they will hasten the ceremony. But they will be severely judged by the old people. Should the little one be sick, the husband will be scolded by the parents of the mother. They will say : "A djambeli ñwana," he has caused damage to the child! If a man forces his wife to transgress the law, she will run during the night to the hut of her husband's father to tell him. Actually this is a very rare occurrence. Children follow each other regularly at an interval of two and a half or three years, and seldom is the law transgressed which says : A mother must nurse her child during three "hoes," viz. three ploughing seasons.

B. CHILDHOOD

591 861 857 The infant, shiputja (Ro.) shihlangi (Dj.) is on the way to become a boy, mufana. During the first years of this period, which extends from the third to the fourteenth year, he stays with his grandparents. They do not give him much "education." He grows at Mother Nature's good pleasure. And as Nature is not always synonymous with morality, he sometimes commits bad actions. Sometimes also, fearing chastisement for a particularly wicked deed, he flees from the kraal of the grandparents and goes home, where the paternal hand will hold him a little more firmly. But the father does not bother much with these little boys and they enjoy an immense amount of liberty. These years are perhaps the happiest of their whole life. They spend their time in the following occupations : herding the goats, stealing, catching game, learning the science of the velt, playing.

1) Herding the goats.

231 Just as the Kaffir corn is the old Thonga cereal which is used alone in the rites, so the goat is the domestic animal par excellence, no doubt the first which the tribe knew and that which is always employed in the sacrifices. Goats are very common ; everybody

595 which, in this country, decimate so many herds! Every three
592 years, theirs wives bear children. If they are boys, it is an
361 honour; the village will not lack heirs, neither will the father
556 lack arms to help and to defend him! If they are girls, it means
842 wealth; oxen will come to the family! Their brothers will not lack wives, for the sisters will be sold to provide for the brothers. Meanwhile, the huts are erected, large and small, that of the head of the family being the largest, the *malao*, those of the boys the least well kept.

Let us consider a Ronga favoured by fate, as was Gidja, of the country of Libombo, near Rikatla. His village numbered not less than twenty-four huts, with beautiful shady trees behind; notice the enclosure for the cattle and for the goats on the central place, that for the pigs behind the houses... There are cocks and hens pecking about everywhere, dogs wandering around in search of something to steal, for they receive hardly any food; a crowd of youngsters leading the cattle, and everywhere the noise of the pestles crushing the daily mealies in the large mortars. He walks about proudly in his favoured enclosure, contemplating his prosperity with pleasure. Young men are ready to do the work he gives them to do. He will treat them with beer brewed by his wives. And often the people of the neighbouring villages will join his people for dances and games on the fine square, which is surrounded and enclosed on all sides by huts.

595 And, above all things, in the evening, each of his wives will
556 bring him the pot which she has cooked for him. This is the
574 essential matrimonial duty of the wife. Not one will fail in it. Gidja, the lord of six or seven pots of mealies seasoned with a sauce of monkey nuts, will feast and be satiated (shura) every day, and that means much, for the inner capacity of a Thonga is something wonderful.

He will become large and stout, and shining, which in South Africa is a sure sign of wealth and nobility. The stouter he gets the more will he be respected. But it can easily be imagined that he cannot alone empty all these pots over which he reigns supreme. He feasts his children, but others too come to pay him visits at the evening hour when they know him to be surround-

5) Sterility.

842 / 782 In the Northern clans, when a woman does not conceive, a special sacrifice is offered, very similar to the one made by the Rongas on the day of the conclusion of the marriage. A goat is killed; a long piece, one foot in width, is cut from the skin of the animal in the ventral region, and three openings are made, one for the head and the two others for the arms. The three openings converge to a point where the astragalus bone of the goat is fixed to a strap. The sterile woman puts on this skin; the astragalus will be seen on her breast. She will also fix the gall-bladder in her hair and wear these ornaments for a time. To the mind of the Thongas, it seems evident that children are given by the gods; hence the idea of a sacrifice in case of sterility. But in addition to the religious rite, native doctors have many drugs to militate against this misfortune (1). The special porridge cooked for a sterile woman (mhika, shimhiko) is called *shiboleko* amongst the Ba-Ronga. The poor woman is despised.

586 Sterility can be a cause of divorce; the husband has the right of sending his wife home. But generally the parents of the woman find a *nhlampsa*, viz. a younger girl, and give her to the husband as a second wife.

6) Pregnancy and Miscarriage.

843 A special treatment is followed for the first pregnancy when the breasts begin to swell, a condition which is called *munyama* (darkness). The physician makes small incisions near the breast and on the legs, and draws out a little blood. The pregnant woman also drinks a decoction for the same purpose, i. e. to

(1) A Pedi man told me that in his tribe the first thing to do was to ascertain if sterility were due to the husband or to the wife. For this purpose a little bit of the clothing of the husband and of the wife was cut off and placed near a spider's nest. This spider is a kind of mygala of enormous size. If the spider took the piece of the husband's clothing down to its nest, it meant that he was in fault, and vice versa.

765 fashion. The father and mother smear the infant's girdle
783 made of cotton flax with their genital juices so that the infant
833 becomes invigorated by their vital juices and thus may be
587 received into the life of the tribe.

These physiological conceptions, though they may be absolutely false from the scientific point of view, certainly proceed from deep intuitions regarding the mystery of life. I insist on the fact that they are not derived from religious ideas. It is a mistake to attempt to explain the whole life of the Bantus by their religion alone, as many writers are inclined to do. These sexual practices are not more religious than those prophylactic measures which we ourselves employ to preserve ourselves from tuberculosis or small pox. They are dictated by a special notion of contagion which is admittedly false, scientifically speaking.]

595 "Annotatio quarta decima (P. 285). Doctori G. Liengmei,
833 nostro medico, cum sæpe curaret viros qui medicinam
842 petebant qua infantes procrearent, fassi sunt se singulis noctibus cum tribus vel quatuor uxoribus coire. (A monogamis quibusdam audivimus uxorem adeo fatigari ut noctu exiret laboratum ut a marito evaderet.) Cum medicus eos hortaretur ut quinque dies concubitu omnino abstinerent, nunquam id concedere potuerunt. Volebant enim facultatem generandi recuperare libidine non omissa. Dicuntur etiam cum vires cupiditatibus nondum pares esse videantur, remedia quædam adhibere sive ut venerem excitent sive ut uxores prægnantes fiant. Duplex fit medicatio. Primum secti testiculi hirci—(quod animal fatigari negatur, mbuti a yi karali)—cum plurimis herbis mixti coquuntur et a viro eduntur. Deinde alias herbas collectas in cerevisiam injicit. Tantum aiunt esse effectum ut viro qui non amplius duas uxores habeat, non sit ea re [520] utendum, ne, illis non sufficientibus, cum aliorum uxoribus stuprum committat, quod ei sit offensioni.

Viri casti, ut in loco Mpfumo videre licet, in sua casa dormiunt et interdum uxorem quam cupiunt ad se vocant. Plerique tamen, lege sibi imposita, ne discordia inter uxores erumpat, mensem unum in casa singularum uxorum vicissim agunt.

Qui plures habent uxores aliis etiam medicaments utuntur ad libidinem excitandam. Quorum unum putant ad effectum maxime valere: Medicus, cum se ipse curavit, in locum montium secedit, quo cynocephali feminæ urinam menstruali sanguine mixtam emittere solent. Quod manet in saxis et fœdissimam diffundit odorem, medicus excipiens coquit, et ex eo magnas conficit pillas quas emptoribus vendit. Hi eas-

595 in cerevisiam injiciunt.
833 Quod medicamentum ad gravia vulnera curanda quoque
842 conferunt, et liberis praebent cum caput ut cynocephali jactant."

[Note 14 (page 285). Doctor G. Liengmei, our physician, often took care of men who asked for medicine that would produce children. They confessed to him that they often slept with three or four wives in one single night. (From some monogamous men we heard that a wife would get so tired that she would go out at night to work just to escape from her husband.) When the doctor told them to abstain altogether from intercourse for five days they were never able to agree to that. For they wanted to regain their generative faculty without giving up their lust. They are said to employ certain remedies even when their powers no longer appear equal to their desires, either in order to excite their sexual desire or to make their wives pregnant. There is a two-fold remedy. First, a man cuts the testicles off a goat--(this animal does not tire, it is asserted, mbuti a yi karaki)--and boils them mixed with numerous herbs; then he eats them. Next he collects other herbs and puts them into his beer. They claim that this has such an effect that the man who has no more than two wives should not use this remedy [520] lest, because his own would not be enough for him, he should commit fornication with the wives of others, which would be a grave offense on his part.

595 Virtuous men such as one can find in the village of Mpfumo sleep in their own houses and call for the wife whom they desire. Most of them have imposed upon themselves the law not to let any discord break out among their wives: therefore they spend one month in turn in the house of a particular wife.

595 Those who have several wives use still other remedies to
756 excite their sexual desire. Of these remedies they believe
833 one to be particularly effective: The medicine man, after
278 he has rested, retreats into the hills where the female baboons are wont to emit their urine mixed with the menstrual blood. That which remains on the rocks and which gives off an abominable smell the medicine man takes up and boils; from this he makes large pills that he sells to all buyers. The latter put them into their beer.

They also use this remedy to cure grave wounds, and they give it to their children when they shake their heads like baboons.]

000 Annotatio quinta decima (P. 477). Veretro fabricatur pulvis, cuius effectus mirabilis est. Qui, bellatorum carnis

782 To these words is generally added an invocation to the medicine-
756 man's gods, who are entreated to bless the drugs they have given
to their descendant, and to join with the traveller's gods in order
484 to insure his success in this undertaking. The decoction is then used to wash the body of the young man. He will pay the fee on his return home.

224 *Offerings of Hunters.* This is called *byalwa bya ngenge*; the beer
782 of ngenge. This beer is made of maize grains which have been crushed but not softened by long steeping in water, as is generally
273 done in brewing ; they are then reduced to flour ; some water is poured on this and it is offered in that form by the head hunter, all his companions standing near him. They must start at once ; there is therefore no time to brew proper beer.

484 *Offerings of Travellers.* These also have their particular mhamba,
782 which is called *Lehika*. It consists of water alone which the officiant takes in his mouth and spits out, saying : "*Pff*!" (amongst the Hlengwes : "*Phaaa*"). "My ancestor-gods! May I find no difficulty
578 on my road, etc." This *water offering* is also made by a headman
782 whose village is troubled by endless disputes. The way of bringing them to an end is not clear. So he entreats his gods to "open the road, pfula ndlela," so that all hearts may be relieved. This will help him to "herd his village, ku byisa muti." The idea of finding a road clearly accounts for the fact that this offering is made under two sets of circumstances so different from one another. Why water is used to attain this end I do not know.

The offerings hitherto described bear a more or less individual character. Let us now consider those which are in direct relation to the life of the family.

782 *Regular Family Sacrifices.* We have seen these performed in
842 connection with the most important events in life. At the *weaning* (I. p. 58, this might however be termed a medical sacrifice), *on the marriage day*, either publicly, as amongst the Ronga clans (I. p. 110), or privately, by the bride's father alone, as is the custom amongst the Nkunas (I. p. 118). The gods are entreated to give the newly married woman "timbeleko," births, i. e., children, as it seems that the power of begetting depends directly
600 on the gods. Regular acts of worship are performed also at the

refused to communicate his secret. He belonged to the Chopi tribe. The Ba-Pedi forbid sexual relations to lepers. 757

A nursing woman who has no milk must take a certain Euphorbiacea shrub called *nete*, containing a milky juice, crush it in the mortar, cook it in water and drink it. When a cow refuses to feed her calf Natives smear the calf with the *ribvumbara* herb, which has a pleasant odour. The cow smells this, and allows the calf to suck. 853

The treatment of *sterility* has already been described (I. p. 190) Mankhelu tried to cure it by digging a root of *Nembe-nembe* and one of *Nhlangowume* ; he cooked both together, and ordered the woman to eat them during a period of six days, mixing them with her food. This drug was considered as "closing her" (pfala), so that she would no longer have her "tihweti, "and thus be enabled to conceive. In the meantime, she had to undergo the horola or hondlola rite, which I shall describe presently. 842 278

Small-pox, nyedzane, was on several occasions introduced by the Whites, or by the Zulu armies on their return from their Northern raids. There have been at least five or six epidemics in the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques during the last fifty years. 164

I had the opportunity of witnessing the last in 1918 in Rikatla and thus obtained first-hand information on the way Natives treat this disease and on their strange ideas concerning it. I published a detailed account of these in the S. A. *Journal of Science*, July 1919, and will give here a description of the most important of these *customs connected with small-pox amongst the Ba-Ronga*. When small-pox has invaded the country and reached the borders of the territory of a clan, the headmen assemble at the chief's residence and decide to proceed to the general inoculation of the population. This is a remedy which they have long been accustomed to use. They have noticed that the disease is milder when produced by inoculation with the virus than when it *hahela*, i. e. flies to the person. (There is some truth in this assertion ; the protection afforded however is not very effective, and severe and even fatal cases often follow the inoculation. It does not always secure immunity from a second attack.) The virus is provided by the people of a neighbouring clan who have already been attacked by 751

on live embers, a pot containing leaves which are supposed to possess medicinal properties. A second mat is then spread over the top of the enclosure, thus shutting the patient up in a sort of small hut. The smoke from the live embers makes him cough terribly. The hot vapour from the pot induces profuse perspiration from every pore, and the victim of this treatment is left for a very considerable time in this intensely uncomfortable condition! When, at length, the remedy is supposed to have had sufficient time to act efficaciously, the mats are removed. The patient suddenly finds himself in the open air, absolutely dripping with perspiration. I saw a man remain in this condition, in the chill of the evening, apparently risking inflamation of the lungs. The doctor rubs his cheeks, or some other parts of his body, with either a white or a black powder. Such is the Thonga Turkish bath, which is frequently referred to in their folklore. — The phungulo is administered in most cases where ritual defilement is feared, or is believed to have caused the disease. The kind of poisoning caused by the impurities connected with death, menses, lochia, etc., manifests itself by swelling of the joints, of the hands and feet, pains in the bones, etc. This vapour bath is also resorted to in order to cure married people who do not succeed in having children. The physician makes for them a shitsimbo packet of the following roots : *Nhlangawume, Mpoñwana, Ritiyi* ; he cooks this in the pot inside the mat enclosure ; and into the fire, under the pot, he puts part of the flesh of the goat which has been sacrificed for the occasion, in particular the uterus. This flesh has been previously smeared with drugs. So, by means either of the vapour, or of the smoke, the medicine enters the patients. "Ba wupfa," — "they ripen" or "are cooked." When the mat is removed, a pot full of cold water is poured over them and extinguishes the phungulo which has "cooked them." They will have to take home the meat, and cook it in their hut together with the packet of roots. Another packet is put into the pot in which they keep their beer.

757

[753]

[842]

A third practice, quite as old as the foregoing, is the *tlhema* or *cautery*. This may be done with a packet of roots, which are heated and applied to the part affected. But, as a general rule,